

shelter of care update

news update : summer part two

The summer seems to last for a long time in Romania. It's not only that the hot summer weather just goes on and on, but the school vacation here is three months long!

Our last newsletter included Genuța's own report on the summer program we ran with our team from England, but in reality, the lengthy summer meant that the program continued long after that wonderful team had left us.



At the park: Julie with two of the younger girls from Bucium

At the end of August, we welcomed Barbara and Julie, from the US. As well as catching up with old friends from the many previous trips they have made here, including Gaby, Mihaela, Maria, and Ioana

and her baby, they were introduced to a whole new generation of young people that form the core of Shelter of Care's work at present.

Together, we ran a short follow-up program involving several of the teenagers from this year's 'camp' here at the office. We also made time to be with some of the older clients who benefit from our Project Amos facility.

A major focus of our work during the summer months is helping the young people to fill all their free time. We were delighted to be able to support Cristina and Petronela into summer jobs this year. Roxana took up a new hobby—painting by numbers—and amazed us with her skills, before getting an excellent long-term job teaching sports at the youth center, which will help to support her financially while she is studying Sport Science at university.

As we approach the winter, and the schools are re-opening, there are big changes for some of our young people. Some are starting new schools, and some, like Crenguța, are beginning their university education. We will be



At the park: Genuța and Petronela

resuming our regular winter program, including children's clubs at the placement centers, and various classes and activities at Project Amos.

We are particularly looking forward to the Friday Club at Bucium, as the children who attend this club were the main beneficiaries of our summer program this year. The director of the placement center has contacted us to say how happy she was with the program we provided. She was so impressed with the children's creative work that she has mounted an exhibition right by the entrance of the main building! We are delighted to see the children receiving this sort of recognition and praise for their achievements—it's a real boost for their self-esteem, and just the encouragement we need to persevere with our work with them.

praises and prayers:

- Sorin, Genuța and Becky will all be traveling to England for a three-week trip beginning October 16th. Please pray for their journey, and for a fruitful and enjoyable time visiting with Shelter of Care's supporters there.
- We are delighted to have received approvals for our proposed counseling center building project at Bârnova from both the Health Department and the Environment Department. This has taken months of patience and very hard work on Sorin's part!
- Please pray for all our young people returning to university this month, especially for Crenguța, beginning her studies in Sport Science at the university in Iași. .

focus : the state of abandoned children

As the horrifying images of Ceaușescu's orphanages finally begin to fade into history, what is replacing them? Can we get an accurate picture of care for abandoned children in 21st century Romania?

While there is no doubt that the number of children in Romania's placement centers (orphanages) has fallen dramatically since a peak of over 150,000 in the 1980s, up-to-date figures can be hard to find.

Romania's National Institute for Statistics gives figures only as late as 2005, when there were just under 69,500 'looked-after' children in Romania, of which 30.5% were living in placement centers.

However, here in Iași we can see that things have changed dramatically in the last five years. Numbers at

Bucium and Tătărași Placement Centers have fallen, Primaverii has closed and the law has changed so that very young children are no longer placed in these institutions (although younger siblings may be placed there with older brothers and sisters).

Despite the changes, a more recent report, carried out by NGOs and published in July this year showed that 36% of 'looked-after' children in Iași are still living in non-family settings (placement centers and children's homes), with just over 30% living in foster care. Most of the children in institutions are older and stand little chance of finding a foster or adoptive family.

As the numbers in placement centers have fallen, physical conditions and standards of care have improved. We no longer see the type of overcrowding where children are

sharing beds. However, it is still common for 6-8 children to share a room, with very few possessions and no privacy. Buildings are becoming increasingly dilapidated, with little incentive to spend money on improvements when the future is so uncertain.

While social workers and NGOs all agree that in theory, foster care is a better option, the disturbing findings of a recent government inspection of foster care provision highlighted serious problems in both management and practice. It seems that many social workers are unqualified, foster parents are failing to reach the most basic criteria for employment, maintenance payments for foster children have not been made and in some cases, children have suffered neglect and abuse at the hands of foster carers.

There is still much work to be done.

statistics at a glance:

In 2005, there were 94,160 children registered as abandoned. This represents 2.41% of Romania's children. Of these, 69,471 were cared for by the state, while the rest were in the care of the extended family.

For comparison, in 2007, 0.45% of children in England were in state care.

In 2005, 30.5% of abandoned children lived in placement centers, 19% in community-based placement units, and 19% in foster care.

For comparison, in England, 71% of 'looked after' children are in foster care.

40% of 'abandoned' children have been removed from their families for their own welfare. 10% have one or more parents working abroad.

30% of abandoned children have been left at medical facilities. 20% have been voluntarily surrendered by their parents.

Social workers view poverty as the single biggest contributing factor in child abandonment.

92.5% of children in foster care do not own any toys. 77.5% have not been given money for school supplies.

In some counties, well over 100 foster children are being monitored by just one social worker.

Read more on the 'about us' pages of our website: www.shelterofcare.com

profiles : where we came from

There is no easy definition of abandonment. The children and young people we work with come from many different backgrounds.

Brothers Andrei, Costel and Ionuț were brought to Bucium

placement center after their mother died and their alcoholic father could no longer care for them.

Roxana was brought to an orphanage as a baby, but her mother never formally relinquished custody, so

even though many people wanted to adopt her she has remained in state care.

Another Ionuț was taken into state care after child protection workers found him out at work like an adult. At the age of 13 and without a

father, his mother expected him to be the breadwinner for the family. Now he lives at Bucium and attends school.

Ana-Maria was brought to the orphanage by her parents at the age of seven. She does not know why she was abandoned.

'For I know the plans I have for you', says the Lord.

'Plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you a hope and a future.'
Jeremiah 29:11



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